

Senator Sherman Is Backed Into a Corner

When He Tried to Show His Great Love For Trade Unionists, When He Viciously Attacked Samuel Gompers, the Grand Old Man of the Movement.

Washington, Aug. 26.—In the United States Senate, last Saturday, Senator Sherman was backed into a corner when he tried to prove his great love and admiration for trade unionists as a whole and at the same time stamp as public nuisance the man they have repeatedly and unanimously elected president of the A. F. of L.

August 15 Senator Sherman first uncorked his spleen because President Gompers, in answer to a letter from a trade unionist, stated Charles E. Hughes' position in the Danbury hatmakers' case while a member of the Supreme Court. This enraged Senator Sherman, who rambled off into a tirade so common in conventions of manufacturers' associations. He said, "Gird up your loins, Mr. Gompers, and answer like a man." The A. F. of L. executive lost no time in accepting the challenge, and wrote Senator Sherman to this effect.

Last Saturday Senator Reed (Missouri) reopened the case by inserting the Gompers' letter in the record, and defended the unionist in a vigorous manner. In reply to the acceptance of his challenge for a joint debate, Senator Sherman quit cold and proved his snobbery and last-century viewpoint when he declared that if the laws of duelling were in force, "I would say to Mr. Gompers that I do not fight with anyone except those of my own class."

AN ILLINOIS SENATOR.

Washington.—Hon. Lawrence Y. Sherman represents the people of Illinois in the United States senate and it is naturally assumed that he knows the purposes and practices of his thousands of constituents who are members of trade unions affiliated to the A. F. of L., and whose representatives have repeatedly and unanimously voted for Samuel Gompers as president of that organization.

Last Saturday, in the United States Senate, Mr. Sherman showed the extent of his knowledge on this subject when he said:

"It is claimed by Mr. Gompers and his school of thought that a given act committed by a union man in the cause of union labor is innocent, while if you or I or two of us commit the same act we are guilty of a felony."

Senator Reed said: "I sometimes think it is a misfortune that men on the floor of the Senate are immune from the pains and penalties of the law against libel and slander. I have known Mr. Gompers in a way—not intimately, but I have been thrown in contact with him—for a number of years. I have had occasion to follow his public acts; for I speak of his acts in connection with the great labor organization to which he belongs as in the nature of quasi-public acts. I have never known him to do an unjust or unlawful act. Instead of being an instigator of strife, it is well known that he is one of the most conservative of advisors of that great body of men of which he is the head. I challenge any man to point to a single time when Mr. Gompers has not sought to promote the interests of the great laboring classes of this country by peaceful means.

"There have been men, there are occasional individuals, who attach themselves to every society, to every organization, whether secular or ecclesiastical, who will reflect by their acts discredit upon the organization to which they belong. There are men who have sat in this chamber whose words and conduct have not added luster to this body. But only the most narrow, the most prejudiced, the most evil-minded of men would charge the individual act of one wicked man to an entire body of men."

Senator Sherman laid great importance on the failure of President Gompers to denounce individual members of trade unions who have been convicted of crime. This was answered by Senator Owen (Oklahoma):

"Mr. Gompers is not called upon as the head of the American Federation of Labor to apologize to the country whenever any member of that organization is convicted of crime any more than the senator from Illinois is called up to apologize to the country whenever a person is convicted of murder in the State of Illinois."

Senator Sherman then pleaded that he had "the very greatest confidence" in the members of organized labor, and again renewed his attack on the A. F. of L. executive. Senator Owen, in reply, made this telling point:

"The senator can not have any confidence in the judgment of organized labor in this country in denouncing as he does this man whom millions of members of the unions have trusted and whom they have elected over and over again. Have these organized labor people no common sense? Have they no judgment? Have they no evidence of the integrity and ability and worth of this man?"

Senator Sherman was getting into deep water and he offered the weak defense that he would communicate with the dissatisfied members of the A. F. of L. and other organized workers not affiliated "and if it will be any satisfaction to the senator from Oklahoma I will give him their names, with their consent."

It was clear that the Illinois senator was getting groggy, and the discussion was closed with this punch from the gigantic Senator James (Kentucky):

"Does not the senator (Mr. Owen) think it would have been more in keeping with the dignity of the senate for the senator from Illinois to have communicated with these gentlemen before he made this charge than to make the charge and then refuse to disclose his evidence, unless he has their consent? It seems to me that the senate is not the proper place for a senator representing a great commonwealth to make broadside charges affecting the integrity and character of citizens of the republic without being willing also to give his evidence. I do not think it is quite the right thing nor the proper place for the senator to make the charge and then say 'I will sustain it, provided I can get the consent of the men who gave me the evidence.'"

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